

## PART I - GENERAL INFORMATION

### *Purpose and Need For This Revised General Management Plan*

The National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 requires that the National Park Service maintain up-to-date management plans for each unit of the national park system. The general management plan for Harry S Truman National Historic Site describes the conditions and experiences that should exist at the site and why. It provides broad management direction for resource management, visitor use, and development 15-20 years into the future.

The park's initial General Management Plan was completed in 1987. Since the original GMP was completed, additional properties have been added to the park, including the two Wallace homes, the Noland home and the Truman Farm. Each park unit required evaluation, and recommendations needed to be made for use and development of the newly acquired properties, in particular, the Truman Farm. For the Truman Farm, management direction and plans were necessary for overall presentation at the unit.

Based on analysis of public comments, the findings of resource studies, and the previous decade of operational experience, the following key issues were identified and are addressed in the GMP.

- **Public Programming**

The pre-1999 interpretation program may not have provided visitors with a thorough understanding of Harry S Truman and the stories and significance of his life in Jackson County, Missouri. This likely resulted in an average visitor experience that did not reach its fullest potential. Collaboration by the National Park Service with other Truman sites is sought by the communities of Kansas City and Independence. There was a need to assess the interpretation program and modify it as necessary to maximize the visitor experience.

- **Visitor Orientation**

Visitors were sometimes unaware of, or confused about the location of National Historic Site facilities. Many also were unclear about how to get from one facility to the next. There was a need to assess and improve visitor orientation to the park, circulation between park facilities, and access to related Truman sites.

- **Preservation of Historic Resources**

The resources important to the story of Harry Truman transcend park boundaries. Coordination and cooperation among those responsible for protecting and interpreting the resources can be enhanced.

- **Management of Truman Farm**

The Grandview Unit, Truman Farm, was added to Harry S Truman NHS after completion of the initial general management plan. Therefore, there was no clearly defined direction for management of that unit. Further, pre-1999 facilities and programs at the unit did not provide visitors with a meaningful opportunity to learn about and appreciate the historical significance of the farm in the life of Truman. Since the Truman Farm is a separate park unit, linking this unit to the main park operation in Independence presented challenges for all phases of park operations.

## ***Site Background***

*"Born in the Gilded age, the age of steam and gingerbread Gothic, Truman had lived to see a time of lost certainties and rocket trips to the moon. The arc of his life spanned more change in the world than in any prior period in history. A man of nineteenth-century background, he had had to face many of the most difficult decisions of the unimaginably different twentieth century. A son of rural, inland America, raised only a generation removed from the frontier and imbued with the old Jeffersonian ideal of a rural democracy, he had had to assume command of the most powerful industrial nation on earth at the very moment when that power, in combination with stunning advances in science and technology, had become an unparalleled force in the world. The responsibilities he bore were like those of no other president before him, and he more than met the test.*

-David McCullough, *Truman*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992, page 991.

*"From his parents and teachers, he learned the values of the straight-arrow Victorian male: monogamy in marriage, courage as a soldier, honesty in transactions with others, a strong belief in the sanctity of agreements (whether between individuals or nations), and a sense of personal honor that led to his discomfort at having to deal with corrupt politicians or make dubious compromises."*

-Alonzo L. Hamby, *Man of the People: A Life of Harry S. Truman*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 639.

A few minutes past nine o'clock on the night of January 21, 1953, Harry S Truman, with his wife Bess by his side, stepped from the train at the Independence depot into a sea of humanity. Despite the cold, ten thousand of the former president and first lady's fellow citizens—many were longtime friends and neighbors—had turned out to say "Welcome home." Mr. Truman thanked them as a man's husky voice yelled over the din, "We love ya, Harry!"

"After nearly eight years in the White House and ten years in the Senate," Truman later wrote, "I found myself right back where I started in Independence, Missouri." [*Mr. Citizen*, p. 29-30.] The journey that culminated in that moment had indeed begun many years before when six-year-old Harry moved to Independence with his family in 1890.

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His parents, John and Martha Truman, moved to town so their children could attend school.

Like children everywhere, Harry was a product of his environment. His view of the world was colored by the time and place in which he came of age. He took with him to the nation's highest office the virtues and prejudices of his Midwestern, segregated, small town upbringing. Parents, teachers, and neighbors all exerted influence on young Harry, reinforcing their values and attitudes on him. Of his teachers he wrote, "They gave us our high ideals, and they hardly ever received more than forty dollars a month for it." [*Year of Decisions*, p. 118-119.]

As a boy who wore thick eyeglasses, Harry read all the history books he could find. "I became very interested in the men who made world history," he wrote. [*Year of Decisions*, p. 119.] Subjects ranged from ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome to modern American history. But reading history "was for more than a romantic adventure," wrote Truman. "It was solid instruction and wise teaching which I somehow felt that I wanted and needed." [*Ibid.*, p. 119.]

Harry graduated from high school in Independence in 1901. That same year, Harry's father suffered heavy financial losses speculating in grain futures, dashing the eager student's college dreams. Harry went to work: first as a time keeper for a Santa Fe railroad project and then as a bank clerk in Kansas City.

In 1906, Harry learned he was needed on his grandmother's farm in Grandview (where he had lived from the ages of three to six). So, at age twenty-two, he became a farmer. Leaving the bright lights of the city behind, Truman moved into a small, two story wood frame house in rural Grandview with his grandmother Harriet Young, his parents, and his siblings, John Vivian and Mary Jane Truman.

For the next eleven years, Harry's efforts to earn a living by the fruits of his labors on the family farm were critical to the development of his character. After his father's death in 1914, it fell to Harry to decide what crops to plant and when to take livestock to market. He learned to get up early and work hard. He followed teams of horses and mules down the long rows in the fields and he put rings in hogs' noses in knee deep mud. The summer sun baked his skin the color of raw beef and winter winds bit through his winter coats.

Life as a farmer, however, was not all work. Truman expanded his social circle by joining the National Guard, the Farm Bureau, and the Freemasons. But perhaps his most important activity (and certainly his most pleasurable) off the farm was his courtship of Elizabeth Virginia Wallace. Bess, as she was better known, and Harry had been classmates in school. While visiting relatives in Independence in 1910, Harry returned a borrowed cake plate to the Wallaces at 219 North Delaware Street. He soon became a frequent guest for Sunday dinners with the family. Through hundreds of letters to Bess, Harry shared his enthusiastic opinions and his keen sense of humor with her. She turned down his first offer of marriage in 1911, but two years later, when he found out she had

fallen in love with him, he exclaimed, "I'm all puffed up and hilarious and happy and anything else that happens to a fellow when he finds his lady love thinks more of him than the rest of the beasts." [*Dear Bess*, p. 142]

When America entered World War I in 1917, it was the "great adventure" and Harry was not going to miss it. After training in Oklahoma, he sailed for France. There, Captain Truman commanded an artillery battery consisting of nearly two hundred men. During the war's final offensive, his leadership skills were tested in the fire of battle. He passed the test and his men would ever after affectionately refer to him as "Captain Harry." At the war's conclusion, Harry, who had been carrying his sweetheart's photograph over his heart, was anxious to get home and get married.

On June 28, 1919, Harry and Bess Truman were wed in the Trinity Episcopal Church in Independence. After the honeymoon, Harry moved into 219 North Delaware Street with his in-laws. He acquired an extended family consisting of Elizabeth Gates, Madge Wallace, and Fred Wallace—Bess's grandmother, mother, and youngest brother—who all lived in the tall gray house.

With Eddie Jacobson, an army buddy, Harry soon opened a haberdashery in Kansas City. The store failed in 1922. At this point, Harry turned to politics. The former farmer, ex-soldier, faltering haberdasher, and family provider allowed his name to be put in nomination for the post of Eastern District Judge on the administrative court of Jackson County, Missouri. With the support of the Kansas City Democratic machine he won that election in 1922.

The year 1924 was both bright and bleak for the Trumans. The February birth of Harry and Bess Truman's only child, Mary Margaret, was a blessing. An only child in a family of adults, Margaret delighted her parents and enlivened the whole household. But Truman's re-election bid failed in November, casting a shadow over his political fortunes.

Truman recovered in 1926 and was elected Presiding Judge on the three person administrative court of the county. Over the next eight years, he embarked on a campaign to build a system of roads in Jackson County. Having gained the confidence of voters by promising to keep graft and corruption in the contracting process to a minimum, he was successful in convincing voters to approve subsequent bond issues even in the midst of the Great Depression. Although Truman gave patronage jobs to Boss Tom Pendergast's men, he also hired out-of-state contractors for road construction. "I've got the \$6,500,000 worth of roads on the ground," he wrote in 1934, "and at a figure that makes the crooks tear their hair." ["Pickwick Papers," Box 238, President's Secretary's files, Truman Library] His success as a county administrator—though tainted in the view of many because of his association with the unsavory Pendergast political machine—led to talk of Truman for Governor, but in 1934 he was tapped for a spot in the U.S. Senate, and soon he was off to Washington.





As a two-term Senator, Truman made a name for himself as a loyal New Dealer, and began to garner national headlines in 1942 as chairman of the Senate Special Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program. The "Truman Committee" ferreted out defense contractors anxious to make a quick buck, and held them to the high standard of quality the war effort demanded, saving taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars. This work brought Truman to the attention of party leaders, and by the summer of 1944 he was Franklin D. Roosevelt's running mate.

On April 12, 1945, Truman became president after Roosevelt's death. The Independence Chamber of Commerce President sent a telegram to President Truman: "... the citizens of your home community who know you best, are trusting in your judgment and ability and praying God's richest blessing upon you in this hour and in the important days ahead." The list of crises Truman faced that year was daunting: The defeat of Hitler's Reich and the occupation of Germany, the formation of the United Nations, the Three Power conference with Churchill and Stalin at Potsdam, the decision to use the atomic bomb against Japan, the defeat of Japan and, at home, the reconversion to a peacetime economy.

The events of the remainder of his nearly eight-year presidency were hardly less momentous. He recognized the new Jewish state in Israel; bolstered the west against Communist aggression with the Truman Doctrine, the Berlin Airlift, and the North Atlantic Treaty; rescued war-ravaged Europe with the Marshall Plan; and led the United Nations effort to defend South Korea. All the while, the American home front seemed equally precipitous: Truman dealt firmly and successfully with economy-crippling strikes in the coal, steel and rail industries. He moved forward on civil rights, desegregating the military by executive order. He oversaw the re-organization of the Executive Branch, creating the National Security Council, Central Intelligence Agency, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. And of course he fought for his political life in the presidential election of 1948, overcoming the fracture of his own party on the way to the most stunning upset of the century.

During those turbulent years, Truman came home whenever possible to relax with family and friends. His family life remained centered around 219 North Delaware. The president's wife, daughter, and mother-in-law returned home to Independence every summer. The president remained at the White House, what he referred to as "The Great White Jail." He plainly missed his family and complained after their first summer departure, "I'm always so lonesome when the family leaves." [*Off the Record*, p. 40]

In 1952, Truman was suffering from low public approval ratings largely caused by the unpleasant military stalemate in Korea, and chose not to run for a second full term. He decided, instead, to go home. Truman returned to Jackson County where he wrote his memoirs, built a presidential library, and became "First Citizen of Independence." But most of all he went home for no other reason than because it was just that—"Home." Harry and Bess, the love of his life, enjoyed two more decades together in their old house in the neighborhood each had known since childhood. In retirement, Truman seemed

comfortable with himself and his surroundings. The homes of his neighbors, the schools and churches he attended, the courthouse on the public square where he launched his political career—all were his personal landmarks. He wrote, “I’ve been taking my morning walks around the city and passing places that bring back wonderful recollections.” [*Autobiography of Harry S. Truman*, p. 109]

Harry S Truman National Historic Site is about more than just the story of five houses. It is about the broad life experience of a boy who read history and how he grew into a man who made history. Many of the elements in his character that prepared him to meet the unprecedented challenges of his presidency were formed during his life in Jackson County, Missouri. This unit of the National Park System provides tangible evidence of his life at home before, during, and after his presidency—places where forces molded and nurtured him.

### ***Significance of Harry S Truman National Historic Site***

The significance of Harry S Truman National Historic Site is derived from the time Harry Truman served as the thirty-third president of the United States, from 1945 - 1953. Yet the park includes physical evidence of a period lasting from 1867 through 1982. This span of time represents nearly the entire context of Harry Truman’s life, and encompasses all major park structures: Truman home, Noland home, Wallace homes, and Truman farmhouse.

Although Harry and Bess Truman were not born until 1884 and 1885 respectively, the year 1867 figures prominently at both the Grandview and the Independence units of the park. Solomon Young, Truman’s grandfather, purchased the Grandview property that year and built a large house where little Harry lived from ages three to six. Later, this large house burned and a smaller version was built - a house where Harry would spend 11 more years as a young adult, from ages twenty-two to thirty-three. Also in 1867, Bess Truman’s grandfather, George Gates, purchased the lot and built (or remodeled) a structure at 219 North Delaware Street in Independence currently known as the Truman home. This 1867 house was later enlarged and became home to Bess from ages nineteen to ninety-seven. By the time of Harry and Bess’s births, these two households (rural and urban) were firmly established. Immediate family members were responsible for the development of both these properties and lifestyles, and both environments figured prominently in the character development of Harry Truman. Most of his ideals concerning religion, social responsibility, financial stability, and politics were derived from the people who lived here, as well as from his own experiences in these surroundings. Therefore, the park’s story can be extended backwards to the 1867 date, so long as any interpretation of these times has direct bearing on, and gives the visitor insight into, Harry Truman as a president of the United States.

Likewise, the park’s story can be extended beyond Mr. Truman’s death in 1972 to that of Mrs. Truman’s death in 1982. Due to his presidency, once Harry’s life transected Bess’s





on a level greater than a casual acquaintance, Bess derived a significance from him that did not vanish upon his passing. While not as important as her husband in terms of history, Mrs. Truman still retained a notability as a former first lady and, in her later years, received several national figures as guests. President Jimmy Carter visited her in 1980 seeking an endorsement for re-election. Although she had always avoided drawing attention to herself, Bess had been President Truman's wife, loved one, best friend, confidant, motivator, and unofficial advisor. Her eighty-two-year acquaintance with her husband (as well as their sixty-two-year romance) is reflected in the minimal changes Mrs. Truman made to their home after her husband's death. Therefore, her ten years without him are a valid part of Truman history.

The significance of Harry S Truman National Historic Site, however, lies not only within the boundaries of the site, but extends beyond them to include Independence and Grandview. How Truman reached the presidency and what he accomplished when he got there were influenced by his experiences in both communities. Together, the national historic site and the Harry S. Truman Historic District National Historic Landmark in Independence offer the opportunity to interpret an even more complete story of Harry S Truman's life than could be done by the park alone. By understanding his home life and his relationships with his family and community, visitors gain a greater understanding of President Truman. This is appropriate, since one of the primary themes of his story is the unity that existed between his personal values, his family life, his citizenship in the community, and his political career. This context is necessary to present the richest possible picture of a man who became the president of the United States. Americans need to know as much about their leaders as possible; the type of people we elect to the presidency tells us a great deal about ourselves.

Secretary of the Interior James Watt, on December 8, 1982, proclaimed the Harry S Truman National Historic Site under the authority of the 1935 Historic Sites Act to protect the site's resources pending action by Congress. The national historic site was established by Congress on May 23, 1983, to preserve and interpret for the inspiration and benefit of present and future generations the former home of Harry S Truman, thirty-third President of the United States. On October 2, 1989, Congress authorized the acquisition of the George P. Wallace home and associated grounds, the Frank G. Wallace home and associated grounds, and the Noland home and associated grounds.

On December 14, 1993, Congress authorized the acquisition of the Truman Farm Home, by donation, from Jackson County, Missouri. Congress also authorized and directed the Secretary of the Interior to provide appropriate political subdivisions of the State of Missouri with technical and planning assistance for the development and implementation of plans, programs, regulations, or other means for minimizing the adverse effects on the Truman Farm of the development and use of adjacent lands.